

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

WA-V-002
District 23
Map 35
Parcel 1
MAGI # 2211795904

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON

Log Cabin

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
Route 40 West

CITY, TOWN
Wilson

☒ VICINITY OF Clear Spring

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

6

STATE
Maryland

COUNTY
Washington

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Eva Irene Bowers C/O Margaret Bowers

Telephone #:

STREET & NUMBER

601 West Franklin Street

CITY, TOWN

Hagerstown

☐ VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

Maryland 21740

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE.

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Washington County Court House

Liber #: 236

Folio #: 17

STREET & NUMBER

West Washington Street

CITY, TOWN

Hagerstown

STATE

Maryland 21740

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION**CONDITION**

☐ EXCELLENT
☐ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☒ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☒ UNALTERED
☐ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

Destroyed, 1977

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This log cabin which was destroyed in 1977 was perched on a bluff above the Conococheague Creek. It was a one and a half story, three bay structure resting on fieldstone foundations which were a full story in height at the front elevation. The logs displayed "V" notching at the corners and shows evidence of having been whitewashed. A stone chimney with a corbel at its top stood at the exterior of the north end wall. When visited in 1973, the house had been gutted and much evidence of its age was removed. No clues to 18th century construction were found, however,

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This log cabin, long a landmark along U.S. Route 40 West provided an example of the vernacular log cabin construction indigenous to Maryland. The expert masonry which was displayed in the chimney is particularly worthy of note.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATAACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.15 acres

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Paula Stoner, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Preservation Associates

DATE

July 1978

STREET & NUMBER

109 West Main Street, Box 202

TELEPHONE

301-432-5466

CITY OR TOWN

Sharpsburg

STATE

Maryland 21782

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 267-1438

WA-V-002

(Photo by Paula Dickey)

'THIS OL' HOUSE'...finally overtaken by progress and facing its Judgment Day.

You've seen it often, if you've ever traveled west on Rt. 40 beyond the Conococheague Creek.

It's a simple, rustic log house — two floors plus attic — nestled in a verdant niche along the craggy rock cliff that overlooks the stone bridge which gracefully spans the creek at that point.

You haven't seen it recently, though, because locust saplings, wild rose and honeysuckle have woven a screen to hide the old house from the view of passersby.

But nature's subterfuge wasn't successful. An inspector from the county's Department of Permits and Inspection found the house. And inspected it. And found it to be an "unsafe building," as defined in our county's Building Code. Its owner has been ordered to raze the structure to the ground.

"I can't deny its abandoned," says Miss Eva Bowers, who has owned the log house since her father's death in 1944. "No one has lived in it since my brother Bob moved out in 1962, after his wife died. But it saddens me to think of having it torn down. And I can't afford to have it torn down anyway. I'm living on Social Security."

The sadder fact, however, is that the log house is possibly the oldest extant structure in Washington County. Rather than be razed, it should be restored to its original condition.

The late Mary Vernon Mish, who directed the restoration of the Hager House, believed that this small settler's cabin pre-dated the stone housefort of Hagerstown's founder. That stone housefort, now our area's chief tourist attraction, is dated 1739.

"We never researched the deed ourselves," says Mrs. Margaret Williams, Miss Bowers' younger sister, "but Papa was told that it had been built in 1730. He bought it in 1902, from Dave Wilkes, mainly because there was a blacksmith shop on the property, and that was his trade. I know for sure that I was born there, in 1913."

There was a stable on the Bowers homelace early in this century, too, because that is where the family's horse was kept. But John Jacob Bowers was more than a blacksmith. He also was a cobbler and a cabinetmaker, building items as varied as boats and cedar chests during his off-season from smithing.

"There was a smokehouse right next to the house," recalls Mrs. Williams, "and the space between the two buildings was my playhouse as a child. I remember washing down that large stone doorstep several times a day, too. It was polished smooth as satin from all of the boots and shoes that has walked over it through the years."

Back in the 1930s, Mrs. Williams recalls, a scout from Henry Ford's Greenfield Village, at Dearborn, Mich., dickered with her father to buy the log house, so that it could be reconstructed at Dearborn.

"Papa would have sold it, too," she points out, "but the man wouldn't offer enough that Papa could have built a replacement. So, instead, the Ford agent took pictures from every angle, measured

the hand-hewn, notched logs and almost counted the number of stones in the chimney."

The beautiful stone chimney of the primitive house serves a single fireplace, in the stone-walled ground-floor room which always was used as the kitchen. The floor above was divided into a living room and a bedroom. There were two more small bedrooms in the attic.

"My one nephew," says Miss Bowers, "Margaret's son, Greg, decided a few years back that he was going to restore the old place himself. He wanted to live in it. He actually started work on it, but he had nothing but bad luck. People even stole the building materials that he took up there — along with the furniture that we'd left stored in the house. Now that Greg's married and living in Virginia he just couldn't get back to restoring it anymore."

Miss Bowers rues the day that she turned down the offer of a local man who wanted to buy the log cabin and restore it. She'd gladly sell it now for far less than the price he offered, just to assure that it would be preserved.

"Not as a memorial to our family," she explains. "We all have our memories of the place. But it should be a memorial to all of those pioneer families who occupied it, long before there was a National Road or a bridge over the Conococheague. That log house was built when people still had to ford the creek."

The stone bridge over the Conococheague at Wilsons was built in 1819. A five-arched span, it is the oldest of our county's stone bridges, built when the National Road was being extended westward to Cumberland. Like the log house that perches high on the bluff above it, the bridge now is ravaged by time — a stone monument to a past era now that storm damages have closed it to vehicular traffic.

"Eva appealed to the county commissioners," relates Mrs. Williams, "and Mr. Keller Nigh was very cooperative. He interceded and got an extension of the deadline for tearing down the cabin. But the truth is we don't want to see it torn down. Like Eva says, the Bicentennial year is a funny time to tell someone to tear down a building that is older than our nation."

Remember Rosemary Clooney's big hit song back in the early 1950s?

*"This ol' house once knew my children,
This ol' house once knew my wife,
'This ol' house was home and comfort
As we fought the storms of life."*

Like the house of those lyrics, this ol' house now is shaky and old, it lets in the rain and the cold; it's afraid of thunder and of storms, it trembles in the darkness when the lightning walks about.

But is there an angel peekin' through a broken window pane?



Just Another Snow Storm

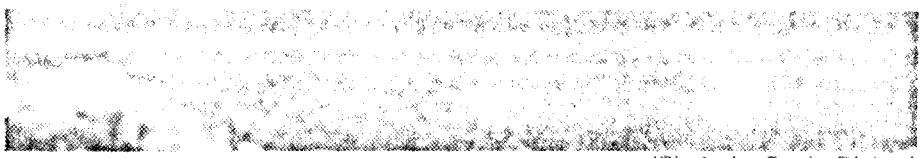
This old log house perched high above the Conococheague Creek at Wilson's, along Rt. 40 west of Hagerstown, doesn't even shudder at the sight of another five-inch blanket of snow. Along with its small outbuilding, also of logs, it has been weathering all kinds of storms for more than 200 years, so the storm that hit this area

last evening — and still is continuing — hardly registers as a mini-snow. The 18th-century log house, believed by many to be one of the earliest structures extant in Washington County, even possibly pre-dating the Hager House, is now unoccupied but undergoing initial stages of restoration.

(Photo by Dave Cottingham)

WA-V-002

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(Photo by Paula Dickey)

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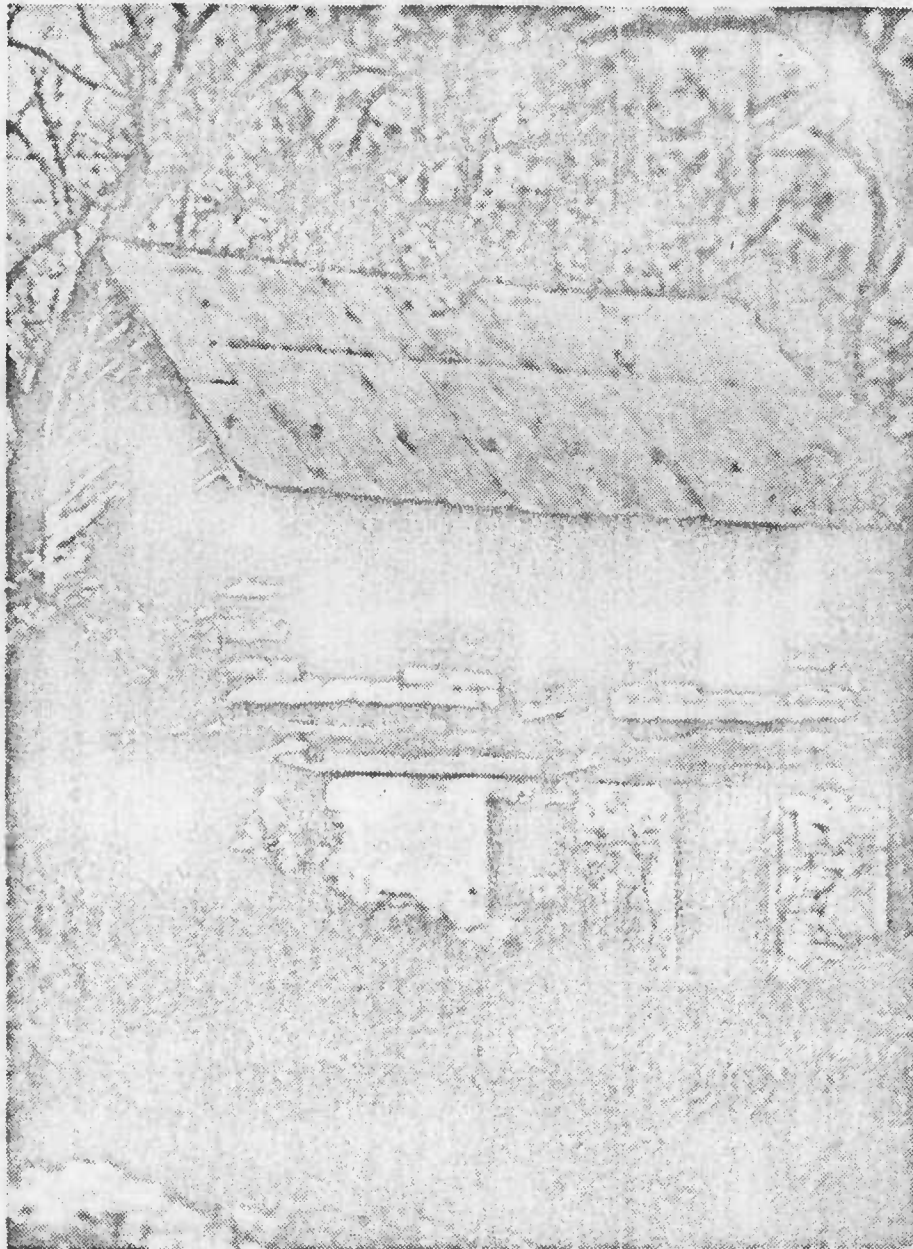
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Main Street

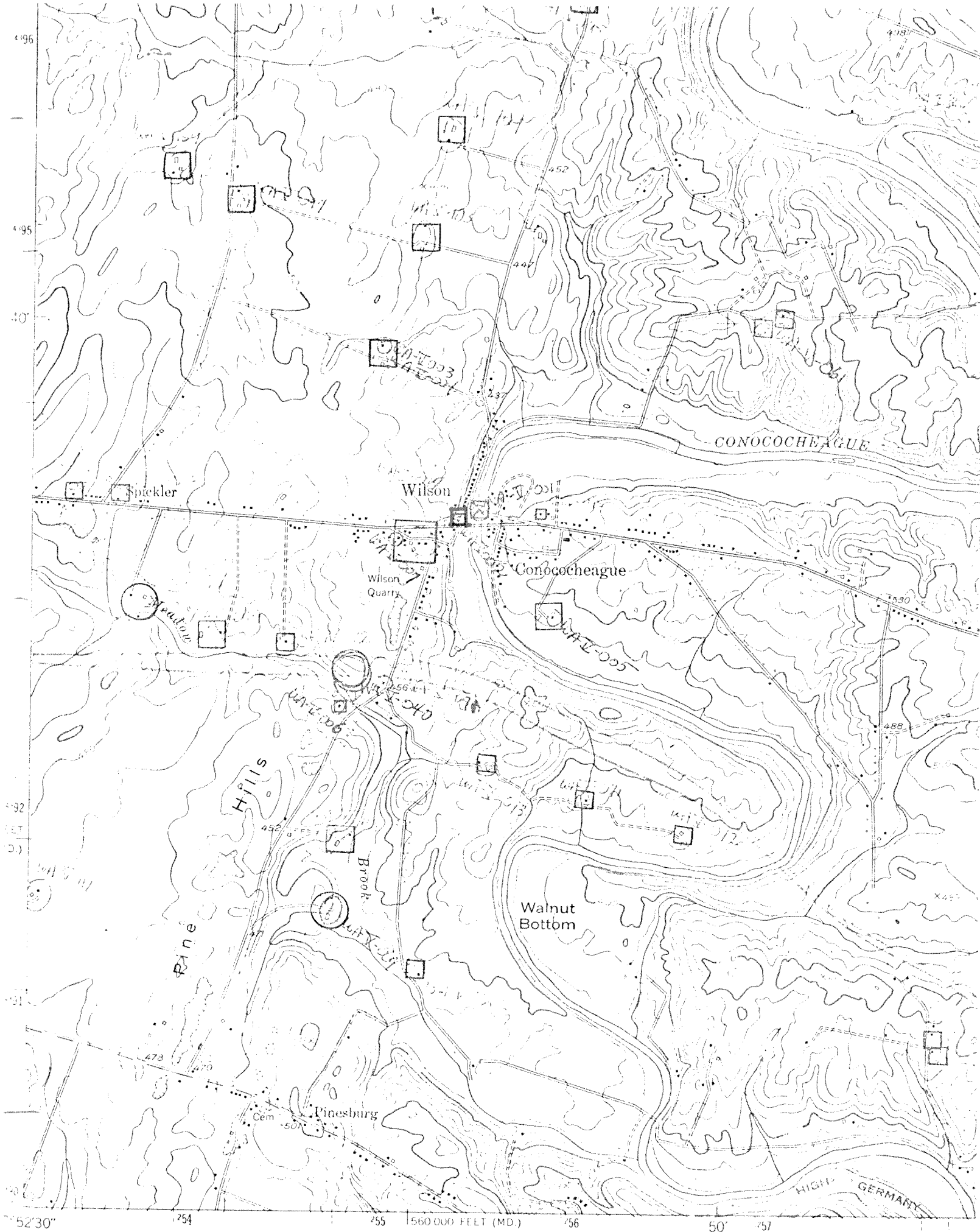
By DAVE COTTINGHAM



(Photo by Paula Dickey)

'THIS OL' HOUSE'...finally overtaken by progress and

WA-V-002



Mapped by Corps of Engineers, U. S. Army
Edited and published by the Geological Survey

MASON DIXON QUADRANGLE

WA-V-002

600-V-002

Main Street

By DAVE COTTINGHAM



(Photo by Paula Dickey)

'THIS OL' HOUSE'...finally overtaken by progress and
losing its hold on the past



Log Cabin

U.S. Route 40 West

Wilson, Clear Spring Vicinity

WA-II-002

S.E.

Aug. 1973

PAULA STONER Dism.
CONSULTANT, WASHINGTON CO.
HISTORICAL SITES SURVEY



WA-TE-002

S. E

Aug. 1913

Log Cabin

U.S. Route 40 West
Wilson, Clear Spring Vicinity

PAULA STONER DICKEY
CONSULTANT, WASHINGTON CO.
HISTORICAL SITES SURVEY